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UNH Hosts Floral Design Competition Dec. 9 to Recognize New 'Cut Flower' Poinsettia

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DURHAM, N.H. -- More than 30 years after cut poinsettia became virtually non-existent, The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension and the New Hampshire State Florists Association are bringing the cut flower variety of this holiday plant back to life.



'Cut Flower' Poinsettia

The two organizations are hosting a floral design competition using "Renaissance Red" Poinsettia cut flowers Tuesday, Dec. 9, at the Whittemore Center lobby on the UNH campus. Judging begins at 4 p.m.

Eight retail florists and a student team will create their displays using the cut poinsettia, which has compact flowers and long stems, and looks quite different than the traditional potted varieties. They will be competing for prize money provided by Fred C. Gloeckner & Co., the company that is distributing the plants to greenhouse growers.

According to Paul Fisher, UNH associate professor of plant biology and Cooperative Extension educator, the purpose of the competition is to recognize and feature qualities in the Renaissance Red Poinsettia that make it a "unique, beautiful, new cut flower for holiday use," to educate florists and the flower buying public, and to support the joint efforts of UNH Cooperative Extension and N.H. State Florists Association.

"During 2000 and 2001, we researched production, post-harvest, and marketing of this new flower product," Fisher says. "We found that the crops were easy and profitable to grow, had a stem length of 24-26 inches, had excellent vase life (2-3 weeks), and generated strong interest among florists. The limitation was low market recognition and a need for promotion and education to generate sales."

Participating designers in the competition include Valerie Dawes, Cobblestone Design Co., Concord; Janet Desmarais, Manchester Flower Studio, Manchester; Mitch Philbrick, Jacques Flower Shop, Manchester; Diane Yeo-Churney Alluring Creations, Manchester; Jim LaMothe, Dubois Flower Shop, Manchester; Heidi Matthews, Sweet Meadows Flower, Dover; and Jeannie Zaconne and Jill Tammara, both from Chalifour's Flowers, Manchester.

In addition, there are three students from Brenda LaMontagne's floral design course at the UNH

Thompson School of Applied Science who are working as a team on a design.

Prizes will include a \$300 first prize for best use and display of the Renaissance Red Poinsettia cut flowers, a \$200 second prize for best traditional holiday design, and a \$100 third prize for people's choice.

Flower designers will receive their stems on Dec. 8 and will have a \$100 budget to create their design. They will deliver them to the Whittemore Center between 2 and 3 p.m. on the day of competition. A panel of three judges, including UNH Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Bruce Mallory, will pick the winners.

The public is invited to attend and learn more about this new holiday plant.

Sponsors include the Anna and Raymond Tuttle Environmental Horticulture Fund, UNH Cooperative Extension, the N.H. State Florists Association, Fred C. Gloeckner & Co., Paul Ecke Ranch, and Scotts Co.